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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: CHISINAU HEADS OF MISSION QUESTION
PRESIDENT ON MEDIA CONCERNS; VORONIN GIVES MIXED
SIGNAL ON NDI

REFS: A. 08 Chisinau 1257 B. 08 Chisinau 1235

Classified by Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry under
1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Western heads of mission met President Voronin on December 22 to raise concerns about pre-electoral media freedoms; Ambassador Chaudhry raised the residence-permit issue of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) country director. Voronin replied disappointingly in public on the media and the NDI, but gave a more positive response on the NDI in a private meeting with Ambassador Chaudhry afterwards. End summary.

12. (C) Ambassador Chaudhry spoke on behalf of the group, noting that many in the West were watching Moldova carefully as elections drew closer, and perceiving much that was inconsistent with democratic norms, especially regarding media freedom. The French Ambassador noted that EU states had issued two statements on the PRO TV license, and commented on "ridiculous arguments" surrounding the Audiovisual Council's decision on PRO TV. (Note: This was three days after the ACC's decision to defer the license renewal question, reported in Ref A. End note.) OSCE Ambassador Remler noted that OSCE's ODIHR would monitor elections, and raised concerns about apparent discrimination against PRO TV, and about the high number of criminal charges facing opposition political leaders. All three ambassadors stressed that they were not judging cases, but reporting negative impressions made by the GOM.

13. (C) Voronin gave his "official assurances" that the GOM would not exert any pressure on mass media, and asserted that media representatives complained about harassment only "to raise their ratings." Voronin described the PRO TV situation as "artificial and politicized," summarized the ACC's December 19 moratorium on licenses, and assured his audience that all media with expiring licenses, including PRO TV, would be able to continue their work.

14. (C) Ambassador Chaudhry also questioned the four months of deferred promises and delays surrounding the work and residence permit of NDI country director Alex Grigorievs (ref B). Voronin's public answer was disappointing: he suggested that activities of such institutions, while acceptable as democracy-promotion between elections, should not be allowed during an election campaign. When Ambassador Chaudhry replied that NDI would be working only on issues

connected to election monitoring, and was not involved in any activities that would affect party politics, Voronin shot back that NDI was already involved.

15. (C) In a private conversation after the meeting, Voronin gave a more satisfactory answer to Ambassador Chaudhry's concerns. Although the President spoke darkly about outsiders trying to influence elections (he referred to 78 Russian FSB agents who roamed about the country in 2005 with large sums of money), he said that the issue of Alex Grigorievs's visa would be solved. All that was needed, Voronin said, was the Ambassador's assurance that NDI would not participate in the campaign. The Ambassador noted that he had spoken personally to NDI head Alex Grigorievs, who had assured him that NDI was undertaking no such activities.

Comment

16. (C) The dispute between Voronin's private assurances and public complaints will be solved when NDI's Grigorievs receives his residence and work permit--or when he is expelled from the country. With the GOM returning to work on January 12, after a break that started for most on December 24, we hope to see a resolution shortly.

Chaudhry